



TOOTHLESS

...you read, it's

you don't even know it and the feeling is

exhilarating.

## **Bookworm & Toothless (Stranger Things AU) by ITOnlyGetsStranger**

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**Summary:** Jessica Hernandez. Best friends with Mike Wheeler, Will Byers, Lucas Sinclair and Dustin Henderson. Known as the Scholar of the group. Or 'Bookworm' to Troy and James. She doesn't like to admit it but, she has a die-hard crush on the boy who loves chocolate pudding. So when Will goes missing and a girl by the name 'Eleven' appears mysteriously, she becomes more cautious.

# 1. Chapter 1

Jessica was pedaling her bike to the Wheelers, her long dark brown hair flying behind her in a tight ponytail.

She had on her backpack full of books and novels she liked to read just in case the boys decided not to play D&D at the last minute like LAST TIME.

She sighed, as she arrived at the house, getting off her bike and pushing it to the side where three other bikes were.

She knocked on the door, biting her lip.

Mrs. Wheeler opened the door, smiling at the brunette.

"Jessica! So glad you're here. The boys are down in the basement."

The girl smiled, her dimples showing.

"Thanks, Mrs. Wheeler," she says, her heavy Latin accent showing.

She heads in, walking to the door to the basement.

She grins when she sees the four boys sitting around a board.

"¡Hola chicos!" she yelled, causing them to turn their heads, all of them grinning.

"Jess is here!" Mike cheered, getting up and tackling her into a hug.

"Hey Mike!" she laughed, hugging him.

"You brought your books? Really?" Lucas asked, smiling and shaking his head.

"Well, I didn't know if you were going to blow D&D off like the LAST TIME we all came here to hang out so I came prepared," she says, shrugging.

"We don't call you our 'Scholar' for nothing!" Dustin says, grinning,

making Jessica blush.

"Of course not Dustin, I nearly beat up Mike to give me that name," she says, grinning at Mike.

He rolls his eyes, smiling.

"So we ready to play?" Will asked, looking at Mike.

"If Jess is, then yup."

Jess smiled.

"LET'S FUCKING PLAY!" she yelled, causing the boys to laugh.

X

"Something is coming. Something hungry for blood." Mike says dramatically, causing Jess to listen intently, careful not to miss a word.

"A shadow grows on the wall behind you, swallowing you in darkness."

Will and Jess look at each other, Jess smirking, revealing that she already knew what it was.

"It is almost here."

"What is it?" Will asked.

"What if it's the Demogorgon?" Dustin asked, causing Jess to roll her eyes.

"Oh, Jesus, we're so screwed if it's the Demogorgon."

"It's not the Demogorgon," Lucas argued.

"It is the Demogorgon," Jess argued back, causing Lucas to roll his eyes.

"An army of troglodytes charge into the chamber!" Mike announced, slamming the board.

Jess rolled her eyes as Lucas smirked at her.

"You were saying?"

"Trogloodytes?" Dustin asks incredulously, staring at Jess.

"Told ya." Lucas teased.

She knew this charade Mike was playing but she wasn't going to say anything.

"Wait a minute..." Mike says softly, causing Jess to smirk.

"Did you hear that? That...that sound?"

Will noticed Jess' smirk growing bigger and bigger as Mike continued on.

"Boom...boom...BOOM!" Mike yells, slamming the table, everyone but Jess flinching.

"That didn't come from the troglodytes. No, that...that came from something else."

Jess grins at Lucas and Dustin's glances at each other.

Mike suddenly slams a figure on the table. It's-

"THE DEMOGORGON!" Mike announced, causing the boys to groan.

"You were saying?" Jess teased Lucas.

"Shut up." he snapped, causing her to laugh.

"Never doubt your Scholar." she sighs, watching the boys bicker.

"We're in deep shit." Dustin groaned.

"Will, your action!" Mike told Will.

"I don't know!"

"Fireball him!" Lucas yelled.

"I'd have to roll a 13 or higher!"

"Too risky. Cast a protection spell." Dustin argued.

"Don't be a pussy. Fireball him!"

"Cast Protection."

"The Demogorgon is tired of your silly human bickering!" Mike interrupts, causing the boys to shut up, making Jess giggle.

"It stomps towards you. Boom!"

"Fireball him!"

"Another stomp, boom!"

"Cast Protection."

"He roars in anger!"

The boys are yelling all at once and Will is unable to decide.

Jess decided to play mercy and whisper in his ear;

"Fireball the fucker."

With the majority deciding Fireball, he rolls the dice and yells,  
"Fireball!"

However, the dice fell on the floor, the entertainment for Jess ending.

"Oh shit!"

"¡Ay mierda!" Jess cursed, getting up.

"Where'd it go?" Lucas asked.

"Where is it?"

"I don't know!" Will exclaimed.

"Is it a 13?" Dustin asked.

"I don't know!"

"Where is it?"

"Oh, my god!" Dustin panicked, causing Jess to turn to the boy with the curly hair.

"Dustin, calm down!" she says, walking towards him.

"Mike!"

"Can you find it yet?" Lucas asked.

"Mike!"

"No, I can't find it!"

"Mike!"

Mike looks up, and see his mom standing on the stairs leading to the basement.

"Mom, we're in the middle of a campaign!"

"You mean the end? Fifteen after."

"Oh my god! Freaking idiot!" Lucas yelled.

"Why do we have to go?" Will groaned.

Jess sighed as Mike went up the stairs, trying to talk his mom into giving them a couple more minutes.

"Oh, I got it!" Will exclaimed, causing Jess to turn and walk up to him.

"Does the seven count?"

Jess groaned, getting on her jacket.

"It was a seven? Did Mike see it?" Lucas asked.

Will shook his head no.

"Then it doesn't count."

Jess put on her backpack while the boys put on their jackets.

"Hey guys, does anyone want this?" Dustin asked, holding the pizza box.

"No." The boys say.

"Normally I would but, ugh, I'm so full." Jess sighs, clutching her stomach.

"Wanna see if Nancy wants it?" he asked, causing Jess to snort.

"I highly doubt that she would but, it wouldn't hurt to ask."

X

The two walked up the stairs, Jess reading Stephen King's 'Carrie' on the way up.

"No, I don't think..."

Jess shot her head up to see the high schooler talking on the phone.

"Yeah, he's cute."

Dustin waved as Jess marked the page she was in and placed it back in her backpack.

"Barb, no, I don't think so."

Jess rolled her eyes as Nancy didn't notice her or Dustin's presence.

"Barb, you're not-"

"Hey, Nancy," Dustin says catching her attention.

"There's a slice left if you want it."

Her eyes dart to the brunette that had her hand on the boy's shoulder, looking at him gently while giving her a glare.



"Sausage and Pepperoni!"

"Hold on," she says before getting off the bed, causing Jess to give her a warning glare.

'Cute.' Nancy chuckled in her head as she gave them both a smile, Dustin smiling at her as she walked to the door.

She then slams it in their faces.

Jess rolls her eyes and flips off the door.

X

"There's something wrong with your sister," Dustin says to Mike when they both walk outside.

"Terribly wrong." Jess agrees.

"What are you two talking about?"

"She's got a stick up her butt," Dustin says.

"She's being an asshole," Jess adds.

"Yeah. It's because she's dating that douchebag, Steve Harrington." Lucas says, causing Jess widen her eyes.

"She's dating that motherfucker?!" she exclaimed.

"Yeah, she's turning into a real jerk," Dustin says as they all got on their bikes.

"She's always been a real jerk," Mike argued.

"No, not really," Jess argued back.

"Nuh-uh, she used to be cool. Like the time she dressed like an elf for our Elder tree campaign."

"Four years ago!" Mike called.

"Still a valid point!" Jess calls as she rode with Dustin.

"Just saying!" Dustin calls.

"Later," Lucas says as they rode off.

X

"Goodnight ladies and gentleman," Lucas says as he got to his house.

"Night Sinclair!" Jess calls back.

"Kiss your mom 'night for me," Dustin says, causing Jess to giggle.

As she got to her house, she turned to the two boys.

"Night boys! Love you!" she yelled, sticking her tongue out.

"Night Jess! Love you too!" they both called out, sticking their tongues out.

As she rode into the garage, pushing her bike aside, she had no idea what the events that will unfold later in the night and following couple days.

## 2. Chapter 2

Jess was riding her bike to school, grinning at Dustin who now had caught up.

"¡Buenas días Dustin!"

"¡Buenas días Jess!"

"¡Buenas días chicas!" Lucas says, causing Jess to stick out her tongue.

"Shut up Lucas!" Jess laughs.

X

As the four of them (Mike had joined them as soon as they passed his street) went to park their bikes, Jess bit her lip, looking for Will.

"That's weird. I don't see him."

"I'm telling you, his mom's right. He probably just went to class early again." Lucas says, walking with the group.

"Yeah, he's always paranoid Gursky's gonna give him another pop quiz." Dustin laughs.

"Step right up, ladies and gentlemen."

Jess groans, turning to see Troy and his minion.

"Step right up and get your tickets for the freak show."

Jess rolls her eyes, squaring her jaw.

"Who do you think would make more money in a freak show?"

Troy walks up to the group.

"Midnight, Frogface, Toothless, or Bookworm?" he asks, hitting the each of them on the shoulder.

Jess rolled her eyes at her name.

It wasn't even an insult!

"I'd go with Toothless." his minion says, mimicking Dustin's slur.

Jess' hands turned into fists, her face going bright red in anger.

"I told you a million times, my teeth are coming in. It's called cleidocranial dysplasia." Dustin says, clearly getting tired of explaining his birth defect.

"I told you a million times." The minion continued to mimic.

"Do the arm thing."

Jess growled, her teeth baring.

"Do it, freak!"

Dustin sighs, removing his jacket.

He stretched out his arms, making it pop.

The boys groaned, wincing.

Jess rolled her eyes at them being overdramatic.

"God it gets me every time," Troy says, pushing Jess to the ground, causing her to groan.

"Jess! You alright?" Dustin asks, pulling her up.

She just glared at the direction Troy and his minion went.

"Fuckers." she hissed.

"Assholes." Lucas agreed.

Mike sighed, turning to Dustin.

"I think it's kinda cool. It's like you have superpowers or something," he says, causing Jess to nod her head in agreement.

"Like Mr. Fantastic."

"Yeah, except I can't fight evil with it," he says, causing Jess to roll her eyes.

"So? You're still cool to me," she says, causing Dustin to smile at her.

"Thanks, Jess."

X

The bell had rung, ending class.

"Remember, finish chapter 12 and answer 12.3 on the difference between an experiment and other forms of science investigation. This will be on the test, which will cover chapters 10 through 12. It will be multiple choice with an essay section." Mr. Clarke says, trailing off in the end when he noticed no one was listening or cared.

He turned to see the four kids standing excitedly at his desk, grinning ear to ear.

Jess was jumping up and down, her curls bouncing, grinning widely as her dimples showed, her freckle-covered nose scrunched up.

"So, did it come?" Mike asked.

Mr. Clarke sighed.

"Sorry, boys and young lady. I hate to be the bearer of bad news but..."

Jess' excitement melted away, bit by bit.

"...it came."

X

The four kids opened the door to the AV room, Jess squealing when she saw the radio.

"Yes!" Mike exclaimed.

"The Heathkit ham shack." Mr. Clarke says, smiling at Jess jumping up and down.

"Whoa." Mike sighed, smiling at it.

"Ain't she a beaut?"

"She's more than a beaut!" Jess exclaimed, grabbing the headphones and putting them on.

"I bet you can talk to New York on this thing."

"Think bigger." Mr. Clarke says.

"California?" Lucas asked.

"Bigger."

"Australia?"

Mr. Clarke nodded.

"¡¿QUÉ?! ¡NO!" Jess exclaimed.

"I'm not joking."

Jess shrieked in excitement.

"Oh, man! When Will sees this, he's totally going to blow his shit." Lucas exclaimed.

"Lucas!"

"Sorry."

Dustin chuckles as they turned it on, Jess and Mike leaning into the microphone.

"Hello, this is Mike Wheeler,"

"And this is Jess Hernandez."

"Co-presidents of Hawkins Middle AV Club." they both say in terrible Australian accents.

Dustin grabs the headphones from Jess' head, putting them on.

"What are you doing?" Lucas chuckled.

"Hello, this is Dustin, and this is the secretary and treasurer of Hawkins Middle AV Club. Do you eat kangaroos for breakfast?" Dustin asks, causing Jess to howl with laughter, leaning on Lucas who had grabbed the headphones for his turn.

They heard a knock on the door, causing the four kids to turn, Jess' excitement melting away when she saw the principal and Chief Hopper there.

"Sorry to interrupt, but, uh, may I borrow Michael, Lucas, Dustin, and Jessica?"

The boys and the girl all looked at each other, frowning.

X

Jess sighed as the boys tried to talk over each other.

This is what she suffers for being the only girl in the group.

"Okay, okay, okay. One at a time all right? You, since you're not being annoying." Chief Hopper says to Jess causing her to nod.

"You said he takes what?"

"Mirkwood," she answered, biting her lip.

"Mirkwood?"

"Yeah," Mike says, causing Jess to nod.

"Have you ever heard of Mirkwood?"

"I have not. That sounds made up to me." The cop next to him says, causing Jess to roll her eyes.

"No, it's from *Lord of the Rings*," Lucas says, causing Jess and Dustin to look at him.

"Well, *The Hobbit*," they both argued.

"It doesn't matter."

"He asked!" Jess argued.

"He asked!" Lucas mocked, in a terrible Spanish accent.

Jess turned bright red in anger as Dustin defended her beloved natural accent.

"Shut up, guys!" Mike said, who was between the two.

"Hey, hey, hey!"

"What'd I just say? One at a damn time. You."

"Mirkwood, it's a real road. It's just the name that's made up." Mike explained.

"It's where Cornwallis and Kerley meet." Jess continued.

"Yeah, all right, I think I know that-"

"We can show you if you want." Mike offered.

"I said that I know it!"

"We can help look," Jess says, looking at the boys.

"Yeah."

"No," Hopper says, looking at all of them.

The four kids started clamoring, demanding they help.

"No. After school, you are all to go home. Immediately."

Jess sighed in anger.

"That means no biking around looking for your friend, no investigating, no nonsense. This isn't some *Lord of the Rings* book."

"*The Hobbit*." Dustin corrects.



"Put a," Jess says, rolling her eyes.

"Shut up!" Lucas says, hitting Dustin in the chest.

"Hey!"

"Stop it!"

Jess and Mike looked at each other and rolled their eyes at their childish demeanor.

She was just as passionate about *The Hobbit* like Dustin however, there were more important things to worry about.

Will is missing.

"Do I make myself clear?"

Chief Hopper got up, glaring at the four kids.

"Do I make myself...clear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yeah."

Jess sighs before looking at the Chief.

"Si Señor," she says, frowning.

Actions

### 3. Chapter 3

Jess was eating with Wheeler family, looking towards Mike with a worried glance.

They decided to have a sleepover since Jess' parents had gone off to a business meeting and would be back by tomorrow afternoon.

"We should be out there right now. We should be helping look for him." Mike argued, Jess nodding in agreement.

"We've been over this, Mike. The Chief says-"

"Screw what the Chief says!" Jess argued.

"Yeah! I don't care what the Chief said." Mike says, agreeing.

"Michael and Jessica!"

"We have to do something. Will could be in danger."

"More reason to stay put."

"Mom!"

"Mrs. Wheeler!"

"End of discussion," she says, causing Jess to huff in anger, looking at Mike who shared her frustration.

"So...me and Barbara are gonna study at her house tonight. That's cool, right?" Nancy says, looking at her mom, causing Jess to look at Mike and roll her blue eyes, clearly hearing 'bullshit' from her sentence.

"No, not cool."

Jess and Mike smirked at each other, enjoying Nancy's misfortune together.

"What? Why not?"

"Why do you think? Am I speaking Chinese in this house? Until we know Will is okay, no one leaves."

"This is such bullshit."

"Language."

"So, we're under house arrest? Just because Mike and Jess' friend got lost on the way home from-"

"Wait, this is Will's fault?" Mike asked angrily.

"Oh my god you're such a bitch!" Jess exclaimed.

"Language."

"Nancy, take that back." Mrs. Wheeler warned.

"No!"

Jess flips her off, her face turning red in anger.

"You're just pissed off 'cause you wanna hang out with Steve," Mike calls her out, causing Jess to snort.

"Steve?"

"Who's Steve?"

"Her new boyfriend, that's who," Jess says.

"Colombian Whore!" Nancy yells.

"Language!"

Jess froze, her jaw dropping.

Mike glared at his sister.

Jess got up from the table, glaring at Nancy who just registered what she said but refused to apologize.

"Put a." she hissed, flipping her off as tears started to stream down her

cheeks as she stormed to the basement.

"Look what you did you racist jerk," Mike growled at Nancy who rolled her eyes and left the table.

"Nancy, come back. Come back."

Mrs. Wheeler sighed and comforted Holly, who seemed to almost break into tears.

"You see, Michael? You see what happens?"

"What happens with what? Jess and I are the only ones acting normal here! We're the only ones who care about Will! And I'm the only one who seems to remember that Jess is extremely sensitive to people insulting her Spanish background!" Mike yelled.

"That is really unfair, son. We care."

Mike just had enough, getting up and leaving to the basement to check on Jess.

"Mike!"

"Let him go."

X

Jess was sobbing on the couch, Mike frowning at her as she laid her head on his shoulder.

"I hate it when people call me that...she knows that," Jess says, gasping as more tears run down her cheeks.

"I told you when she's always been a jerk, she's always been a jerk." Mike sighed.

Jess shrugged, sniffing.

"I remember a time I used to consider her my sister. Now she's just a bitch that abandons a friend once they get popular."

She chuckled, wiping her eyes.

"Thanks for listening to me rant Mike, you're like a true brother to me."

Mike smiles at Jess.

"And you're like the sister I WISHED my sister was like. A bit more understanding."

She chuckled, smiling at the freckled boy.

X

"Lucas, do you copy? It's Mike. Lucas?"

*"Hey, it's Lucas."*

Jess rolls her eyes and takes her Supercomm.

"We know it's you. This is Jess here. And say 'over' when you're done talking so we know when you're done. Over."

*"I'm done. Over."* Lucas replies back sarcastically.

"We're worried about Will. Over." Mike says in his.

They hear Lucas sigh.

*"Yeah. This is crazy. Over."*

"I was thinking...Will could've cast Protection last night, but he didn't. He cast Fireball. Over." Mike continued.

*"What's your point? Over."*

Jess sighs before answering through hers.

"His point is...he could've played it safe, but he didn't. He put himself in danger to help the party. Over."

Lucas hesitated before answering.

*"Meet me in 10. Over and out."*

The three of them slid their antennas down and they both took supplies from the basement, shoving them in their backpacks.

They both left through the basement, grabbing onto their bikes and leaving the house.

But Mike turned to see Steve Harrington getting to Nancy's window.

Jess noticed and rolled her eyes, telling Mike to come on.

X

The boys had caught up with the two, riding their bikes to Mirkwood.

"Ah, man. This is it." Lucas says, causing all of them to stop.

They got out of their bikes, Dustin looking up when thunder was being heard.

"You guys. You feel that?"

Jess looks to Dustin who was wiping a raindrop from his face.

"I think maybe we should go back."

"No. We're not going back. Just stay close." Mike says, putting his bike aside.

"Come on," Jess says, following Mike.

"Just stay on channel six. Don't do anything stupid." Mike calls as Lucas followed behind Jess.

Dustin hesitated before his eyes landed on Jess' bouncing brown curls.

"Hey, guys! Wait up!"

He runs up to them, Jess smiling at him.

"Wait up!"

"We are Dustin!" she giggles.

X

"WILL!" Jess screamed, her hair sticking to her face as the rain poured on her and the boys.

"Will!"

"Will!"

"Byers!"

"I've got your X-Men 134!"

"WILL!" Jess screamed again.

"Guys, I really think we should turn back," Dustin says, causing Jess to turn to the boy.

"Dustin, really?!"

"Seriously, Dustin?" Lucas says, agreeing with Jess.

"You wanna be a baby, then go home already."

"Lucas Sinclair!" Jess exclaimed.

"What?!"

"Don't call him a baby! I'm also scared!"

"Yeah! Besides, I'm just being realistic, Lucas." Dustin argued.

"No, you're just being a big sissy!"

"Did you ever think Will went missing because he ran into something bad? And we're going to the exact same spot where he was last seen? And we have no weapons or anything?" Dustin asked.

Jess frowned, furrowing her eyebrows.

"Dustin, shut up," Mike says before Jess could voice on how he made a good point.

"I'm just saying, does that seem smart to you?"

"Shut up. Shut up. Did you guys hear that?"

There was rustling, causing all of them to gasp, Jess grabbing onto Dustin's free hand, her flashlight shaking in her other hand.

There was more rustling, causing them to turn their flashlights, Jess' gasp of shock at what they saw.

A kid their age in a huge yellow t-shirt shivering and breathing heavily.

Jess and Mike looked at each other before looking back to the kid, who now Jess had a good look at looked like a girl.

And for some reason...

Both her and Mike wanted to help her.



## 4. Chapter 4

They were all back at Mike's house, surrounding the girl that had on Mike's jacket and was sitting on the couch in the basement.

"Is there a number we can call for your parents?" Mike asked, looking genuinely worried.

"Where's your hair? Do you have cancer?" Dustin asked.

"Did you run away?" Lucas asked.

"Are you in some kind of trouble?" Jess asked calmly, looking at the girl sympathetically.

"Is that blood?"

Lucas reached out to touch the red stain on her shirt.

Mike hit his arm back.

"Stop it! You're freaking her out!"

"She's freaking me out!"

"I bet she's deaf."

Dustin claps loudly, causing the girl to flinch.

"Not deaf."

"All right, that's enough, all right? She's just scared and cold." Mike says, leaving to get some clothes.

When thunder rumbled loudly, she gasped, flinching.

"Hey, you're okay," Jess reassured her, causing the girl to look at her, making Jess smile gently.

"Here, these are clean. Okay?" Mike says, handing her a sweatshirt and a pair of sweatpants.

She takes them, rubbing her face on it comfortingly.

She puts them aside, taking off the jacket Mike gave her and reached to pull off the shirt.

"No, no, no!" Jess and Mike exclaimed, keeping the shirt down as Lucas and Dustin looked away.

"Oh my god. Oh my god." Dustin exclaimed.

"See over there? Th-That's the bathroom. Privacy. Get it?" Mike says, looking at the girl.

The girl looked to Jess who gave a small smile, beckoning her to follow her.

The girl grabbed the clothes Mike gave her and followed Jess with Mike behind her.

Once she entered the bathroom, Mike was closing the door when the girl turned around and stopped him.

"You don't want it closed?" Mike asked Jess next to him.

"No."

Jess grinned.

"She speaks!"

"Oh, so you can speak. Okay, well..." Mike trailed off, looking to Jess.

"How about we just keep the door..." Jess says, Mike, closing the door until there was reasonable about still open.

"Just like this," Mike says, Jess, nodding in confirmation.

"That better?" Jess asked, looking at the girl.

"Yes."

They both nod, smiling at her.

X

"This is mental." Dustin sighed.

"At least she can talk." Mike defended her.

"I can confirm that." Jess agreed.

"She said 'no' and 'yes'. Mike's three-year-old sister says more." Lucas argued.

"She tried to get naked," Dustin says.

"There's something seriously wrong with her. Like wrong in the head." Lucas says.

"That's rude Sinclair." Jess snapped.

"It's true," Lucas argued.

"She just went like..." Dustin says, motioning with his hands what the girl was doing, making his hat fall off.

"I bet she escaped from Pennhurst," Lucas says,

"From where?" Mike asked.

"The nuthouse in Kerley County."

"You got a lot of family there?" Dustin asked, making Jess snort in amusement.

"Bite me." Lucas threatened.

"Seriously though, think about it. That would explain her shaved hair and why she's so crazy."

"Why she went like..." Dustin says, motioning what the girl did again.

"She's an escapee is the point. She's probably a psycho."

"Like Michael Myers," Dustin suggested.

"Exactly! We should've never brought her here."

"So you just wanted to leave her out in that storm?" Mike asked, Jess, crossing her arms, making her point clear she was on Mike's side.

"Yes! We went out to find Will, not another problem."

"I think we should tell your mom," Dustin suggested.

"I second that."

"You guys are such putas I swear!" Jess exclaimed.

"Who's crazy now?" Mike says, agreeing with Jess.

"How is that crazy?"

"How is that- We weren't supposed to be out tonight, remember?" Jess exclaimed.

"So?"

"So, if I tell my mom, and she tells your mom and your mom, and her mom when her parents are back tomorrow..."

"Oh, man." Dustin groans.

"Our houses become Alcatraz," Lucas muttered.

"Exactly! We'll never find Will." Jess sighed.

"All right, here's the plan. She sleeps here tonight." Mike says.

"You're letting a girl that isn't Jess-"

"Just listen! In the morning, she sneaks around my house and goes to the front door and rings my doorbell. My mom will answer and know exactly what to do. She'll send her back to Pennhurst or wherever she comes from. We'll be totally in the clear. And tomorrow night, we go back out. And this time, we find Will." Mike says, causing Jess to nod.

"Now, I second this." She says, glaring at the boys to dare say otherwise.

X

Jess and Mike were handing the girl blankets and pillows for her to sleep on as well as Mike's sleeping bag in a fort they made for her.

Dustin watched as Jess had a huge smile as the girl took the blankets from her, smiling at her as well.

"Mental." He says before following Lucas.

"Hey, um, we never asked your name," Mike says, Jess nodding.

The girl looked at Jess and Mike before revealing her arm, that had *011* on it.

Jess gasped, looking towards the girl.

"Is that real?" Mike asked, reaching over to touch it.

She flinched away, making Mike look up at her.

"Sorry, I've just...never seen a kid with a tattoo before," Mike says, smiling sheepishly.

"What's it mean? Eleven?" Jess asked.

The girl points at herself.

"That's your name?" Mike asked.

She nodded.

"Unique," Jess says, smiling at Eleven.

"Eleven. Okay. Well, my name's Mike, short for Michael."

"And my name's Jess, short for Jessica," Jess says, smiling at her.

"Maybe we can call you El, short for Eleven," Mike suggested.

Eleven nods, agreeing to it.

"Um, well, okay. Night, El."

"Night, Mike."

"I'll join you soon okay Mike? I wanna talk to her for a bit more. I won't be long okay?" Jess says Mike nodding.

"Ok."

Jess smiled at El, who watched the girl.

"You know, I never really talked to another girl before since I move to Hawkins," Jess confessed, making El smile a bit.

"Mike and the boys are like my brothers in a way. We look out for each other. Hopefully, we can be like sisters. I never had one before."

El nods, hoping for the same thing.

Jess smiled before sighing.

"Your name's Eleven, right?"

El nods.

"Well, Mike gave you your nickname for everyone to use, how about I give you my own kind of nickname?"

El nods again.

"How about, 'Once'? It's Eleven in Spanish."

"Spanish?"

"It's a different language. Kinda like English but...different." Jess explained.

El nods, liking it.

Jess smiled.

"Ok then. Buenas Noches Once."

El hesitated before replying.

"Buenas Noches Jess."

Jess smiled before drawing the blanket to close the fort.

## 5. Chapter 5

"Make sure you get some for El alright?" Jess whispered to Mike as they waited for the Eggos to pop up.

Mike nodded.

"I know."

Jess smiled, looking at the basement.

"What did you two talk about?"

"Nothing much, really. It's a shame she has to leave. I would like to have another girl in the party." Jess mumbled, causing Mike to smile sadly at her.

"I know. If the circumstances weren't dire, I would have welcomed her to the party once we got to know her a bit more." Mike agreed.

"I have my own nickname for her too, though, only I can call her it," Jess says, smirking at Mike.

"Really? What is it?"

"Once." She replied.

Mike rolls his eyes and Jess giggles.

"How original."

The Eggos popup, Mike taking two of them and shoving them in his jacket pocket.

They each take two Eggos and put them on their plates.

X

Mike makes sure Jess sits next to him at the end of the table and not in the middle between him and Nancy because Jess was still upset about Nancy's comment about her yesterday night.



They both shove their Eggos into their mouths, so they can greet El good morning and give her breakfast.

"Slow down, Mike and Jess. That's disgusting."

While Jess refused to reply and just flips her off, Mike glared at Nancy.

"Do a lot of studying last night?"

"Yeah, actually, I did."

"What was your test on again? Human Anatomy?"

Jess giggled softly as Nancy kicked his leg and he kicked her leg back.

"Hey, what's going on?"

They both look at Mrs. Wheeler.

"Nothing."

Jess sips on her cup of OJ, winking at Mike who just smiles and rolls his eyes.

X

The two pulls up the blanket that was covering the fort and found Eleven playing with Mike's supercomm.

"Hey, you found my supercomm. Pretty cool huh?" Mike says, smiling at her.

She looks up to see Jess and looks back down at the supercomm.

"I talk to my friends with it. Mostly Lucas and Jess 'cause they live so close. Signal's pretty weak."

"Yeah, it really is." Jess chuckled.

Eleven looked at Mike who gets the Eggos and hands them to her.

"Got you breakfast." He says, Jess smiling as El took a bite out of the waffle.

"So listen, this is gonna sound a little weird, but I just need you to go out there. Then go to the front door and ring the doorbell. My mom will answer and you'll tell her that you're lost and that you need help. But whatever you do, you can't tell her about last night or that you know us. Understand?"

Jess looked at Eleven, biting her lip.

"It's actually no big deal Once, we'll just pretend to meet each other again. And Mike's mom, she'll know who to call." Jess assures the girl.

Eleven looked at the two before replying.

"No."

Jess furrowed her eyebrows in confusion.

"No?" Mike asked, equally confused.

Eleven shook her head.

"No."

"No...you don't want my mom to get help?"

Eleven looks back up at Mike, shaking her head.

Jess got closer to the girl, and Eleven looked at the girl's blue eyes.

"You're in trouble, aren't you?" Jess says quietly, looking at Eleven's brown eyes.

Eleven frowned, looking down and up at her again.

"Who...who are you in trouble with?" Mike asked.

Eleven looked scared, as if what she might say will hurt them.

"Bad." She whispered.

Jess frowned, still a bit confused.

"Bad? Bad people?" Mike asked.

Eleven nodded, causing Jess to widen her eyes, in fear.

But not for herself, but for the wellbeing of Eleven.

"They want to hurt you?" Mike asked, Jess biting her lip in worry.

"The bad people?" Jess asked.

Then Eleven did something unpredictable.

She made a finger gun and pointed it at herself, to Mike, and finally at Jess.

Jess gasped, her voice cracking, her hand covering her mouth.

Eleven put it down, frowning apologetically at Jess but asking;

"Understand?"

Jess let in a deep breath and unwilling to trust her voice, she nodded.

"Michael and Jessica, where are you? We're going to be late. Let's go!"

"All right, We'll be back. Just stay here, okay? Stay here."

As they got up and out of the basement, Jess grabbed Mike and gasped through her tears.

"M-Mike she's our age and she has people, BAD people who want to kill her and anyone who helps her! I-"

"I know Jess, I know. It shocks me as well. But, are you still in on helping her?"

She gave him an 'are you fucking serious?' look.

"This just gave me more reason to protect her! We're skipping today." Jess says, Mike nodding.

"I agree."

Jess sighed.

"I wish we could tell the boys but, Lucas doesn't seem to trust her. I get where he's coming from, but there's no reason to act so mean."

Mike nods as they walk outside, getting on their bikes.

"Let's go so we can trick my parents that we're going to school."

Jess nods, both of them riding their bikes in silence.

X

Back at school, Dustin and Lucas had sat at their desks.

"Oh, this is weird," Dustin says, looking over to see the seat next to him and the seat next to Lucas were empty.

"They're never this late."

"I'm telling you, his stupid plan failed," Lucas says, rolling his eyes.

"I thought you liked his plan."

"Yeah, but obviously it was stupid, or he'd be here. Jess too, if she wasn't staying at his place the night."

"If his mom found out a girl that wasn't Jess spent the night-" Dustin says, imagining the worse.

"He's in deep shit right about now."

"Hey, what if she slept naked?"

"Oh my God, she didn't. If Jess were here she'd flip you off."

"Oh, if Mrs. Wheeler tells my parents..." Dustin groaned.

"No way. Mike would never rat us out. And Jess has a major cr-" Lucas froze, knowing he wouldn't live to see another day if Jess found out he told Dustin she had a major crush on him.

"And Jess wouldn't either."

"I don't know."

"All that matters is, after school, the freak will be back in the loony bin, and we can focus on what really matters, finding Will."

Dustin sighs, looking back at the empty seat next to him that would normally be seated by Jess.

## 6. Chapter 6

Mrs. Wheeler's car drove past, Mike and Jess waiting till it was clear before they rode back to Mike's house.

"Ok, let's head back," Jess says, riding down the hill, Mike following behind her.

X

"You want anything to drink?" Mike asked Eleven who was following the pair around the house.

"We have OJ, skim milk...what else?"

"Water?" Jess teased, causing a smile to appear on Eleven's lips as Mike rolls his eyes.

She headed into the living room, looking at the TV.

"Um, we have..."

Mike turned and smiled as Eleven studied the TV with her eyes.

"Oh, this is my living room."

"It's mostly just for watching TV. Nice right? It's 22-inch."

"That's like ten times bigger than Dustin's." Jess giggled, Mike nodding.

Eleven walked up to the family pictures, looking at one of Nancy.

"Pretty." She smiled.

Jess rolls her eyes as Mike frowned.

"I guess."

"She's still a bitch," Jess mutters.

"That's my sister Nancy, and that's baby Holly, and those are my

parents," Mike says as Eleven went through each of the pictures.

"What are your parents like?" Mike asked, not getting an answer.

"Do they live close?"

Eleven stayed quiet, now interested in the chair.

"That's a La-Z-Boy," Jess says, smiling at Eleven's curious nature.

"It's where my dad sleeps. You can try it if you want." Mike says, Eleven now looking at him.

Eleven sits on the chair, Jess kneeling down, ready to pull it back.

"Just trust me, okay?"

Eleven nods, tensing for what was about to happen.

Suddenly, the chair pulls back, causing Eleven to gasp.

Mike and Jess chuckle while Eleven laughs nervously.

It didn't feel bad, the rush just felt so...sudden.

"See? Fun, right?" Mike says, grinning at Eleven who was smiling at him and Jess.

Mike sets it back up, Eleven watching him carefully.

"Now you try," Jess says, smiling at her.

Eleven leans and pulls the handle, causing the chair to pull back.

The three laugh, Jess burying her face into Mike's shoulder as her laughs became stronger and uneasy to control, Mike laughing at her trying to control her laughter.

Eleven giggles, relaxing and having fun with her new friends.

X

Mike slams the Yoda figure on the table, grunting weirdly.

"Ready are you? What knows you of ready?" he mimics, making Jess burst out laughing.

"His name's Yoda," Mike says, holding the figure.

"He can use the Force to move things with his mind, like this," Jess says, pushing the toys off the board.

Eleven looked uninterested about the information and looked over to see Mike's trophies.

"Oh, this is my dinosaur, Rory. Look he has a speaker in his mouth so he can roar."

The dinosaur roared, making Jess roll her eyes, looking to see Eleven had stood up, walking over to where Mike's trophies were.

They both got up, walking over to Eleven who was looking at all the trophies.

"Oh, these are all my science fair trophies," Mike says, Jess smiling at each of them.

"Some of them were won when I moved here a few years ago. 5 years, to be exact." Jess says, recognizing a trophy that was on Mike's stand from her first science fair with the boys.

She had a few trophies of her own back at her place.

"Yeah, we got first every year."

"Well, except for last year when we got third. Mr. Clarke said it was totally political." Jess says, rolling her eyes.

Eleven stared at a picture of the boys and Jess holding a trophy, all of them smiling.

Mike notices that she's staring at the picture, causing him to glance at it.

She pointed at Will, causing Jess to gasp.



"You know Will?" Mike asks, looking at Eleven.

"Did you see him? Last night? On the road?" Jess asked.

No answer.

The three turned when they heard a vehicle approaching, causing Jess to gasp.

Mike walks up to the window, seeing his mother's car pulling up in the driveway.

"We gotta go," Mike says, grabbing Eleven's hand.

"Shit!" Jess cursed, grabbing Eleven's other hand.

Eleven tensed, but relaxed when she felt that the way they were holding onto her and pulling her towards the stairs was protective.

"I bought pizza and macaroni." Mrs. Wheeler says, opening the door, causing Mike and Jess to freeze.

Mike and Jess pull Eleven back up the stairs, knowing that they were screwed.

"Ted? Is that you?"

"Just me, Mom!"

"And me, Mrs. Wheeler!" Jess says, giving Mike a look before he could shoot her an 'are you kidding me?' look.

"Mike? Jess? What're you doing home?"

"One second!" Mike yelled.

They pull Eleven back into Mike's room, Jess closing the door as Mike opens the closet door.

"In here. We'll be right back, okay?"

"Please, you have to get in, or Mike's mom, she'll find you. Do you understand?"

Eleven hesitated.

"We won't tell her about you. We promise." Mike reassures her, Jess nodding.

"Promise?"

"It means something you can't break. Ever." Jess says, Mike nodding.

"Michael? Jessica?"

They all look at the door and back at each other.

"Please?" Mike and Jess whispered.

Eleven sighed, deciding to brave her fear just to make sure to stay hidden.

She walked into the closet, freezing when Mike started to close the door.

"It's going to be alright Once, ok? We'll be back, I promise." Jess says, Mike closing the door.

Eleven gasps, breathing shakily.

X

"I just...I don't feel good." Mike lied, Jess nodding.

"I woke up and my head, it really hurt bad, and my throat was all scratchy, and I wanted to tell you, but the last time I told you I was sick, you made me go to school anyway, and-"

"Michael."

"Yeah?"

"I'm not mad at you."

Jess widened her eyes, not believing it.

She hadn't even said her excuse yet!

"No?"

"No, of course not."

Jess sighed in relief, looking up the stairs, biting her lip.

"All this that's been going on with Will, I can't imagine what's it been like for you. For the both of you."

Jess smiles weakly at Mrs. Wheeler, playing with her thumbs.

"It's been hard," she admits, not lying.

Mike sighs, looking at Jess.

"I just...I want you to feel like you can talk to me." Mrs. Wheeler says, making Mike look back at her.

"I never want you to feel like you have to hide anything from me. I'm here for you. For both of you. Okay?"

Mike and Jess nodded.

A thud was heard, making Jess jump, her eyes widening.

"Once..." she whispered under her breath.

"Is there someone else here?"

Mike and Jess look back at her.

"No."

X

Jess rushed to Mike's room, Mike following behind her and closing the door and locking it.

"Eleven? Is everything okay? El?"

Jess opened the closet door, gasping when she saw Eleven sitting, her knees pulled to her chest, crying.

"Once..." Jess whispered.

"Mike...Jess..."

"Is everything okay?" Mike asked, Jess rubbing Eleven's shoulder comfortingly.

Eleven gasps, nodding.

Jess had kept her promise and by the looks of it, Mike also did with his.

"Are you sure?" Jess asked.

Eleven nods, smiling weakly.

"Promise."